DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 198 891 JC 810 199

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TITLE Stimulating the Collegiate Function.
PUB DATE 21 Apr 81
NOTE 10p.: Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (61st, Washington, DC, April 20-23, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Curriculum; *College Role; *Community Colleges; Educational Trends; General Education; *Liberal Arts; *Transfer Programs; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS Community College Humanities Association; League for the Humanities

ABSTRACT

This paper examines recent efforts by community college educators to enhance the liberal arts in a curriculum which is increasingly dominated by career, compensatory, and community education programs. The paper first notes the decline of the transfer function at today's community colleges and argues that the liberal arts, if they are to survive, must not remain solely within a college-parallel context. Three multi-organizational efforts initiated to revitalize the liberal arts are then described: (1) the formation of the Community College Humanities Association, which utilizes regional meetings as forums for innovative ideas; (2) the formation of the League for the Humanities, an association of western community colleges which plans to examine methods of strengthening the humanities through marketing, faculty exchanges and other cooperative efforts; and (3) regional humanities workshops sponsored by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. The paper then concludes with a discussion of alternative humanities programming efforts initiated by individual colleges. These efforts include the formation of humanities advisory groups; the development of general education programs; and the integration of the humanities into occupational curricula through interdisciplinary courses, specialized courses for specific occupational areas, and humanities modules within occupational courses. Specific examples of these institutional efforts are provided. (JP)

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JC 810 199

Paper presented to:
AACJC National Conference
April 21, 1981
Washington, D.C.

STIMULATING THE COLLEGIATE FUNCTION

Florence B. Brawer

Since the 1950s when many junior colleges broadened their offerings and proclaimed themselves to be community colleges, comprehensiveness became their byword. Moving away from an initial focus on the first two years of the baccalaureate and, to a lesser degree, some scattered vocational/technical programs and remedial offerings, these comprehensive colleges gradually adopted four functions: career, compensatory, continuing, and collegiate.

Today's community colleges still stress these four functions, but the emphases are strongly skewed. Career education typically controls the majority of course offerings. Continuing and compensatory courses follow closely behind. And the collegiate function -- the primary fuocus of the earlier colleges in their transfer-education offerings -- is slowly eroding.

For the majority of students, the community colleges do not serve as stepping stones to the higher learning. Instead, these colleges provide their constituents with occupational studies, remedial education, and a variety of ad hoc cultural and recreational activities. More than half the students entering community colleges do so for purposes of occupational training. Remedial studies are prominent; for example, one-third of all mathematics offered in community colleges is at the less-than-college algebra level. In short, the three Cs -- career, compensatory, and community education -- have driven the fourth C -- collegiate studies -- nearly out of the institutions.

JC 810 199

The so-called transfer programs are especially weak. Ostensibly comprised of courses similar to those that students would study if they were enrolled in the lower division of senior institutions, they have become a catch-all for students who already have degrees -- or who have no aspirations toward one -- and for those who have failed to gain entrance to one of the community college's selective-admissions allied health or technology curriculums.

This re-shaping of the curriculum toward other-than-transfer courses would be of interest only to the educational historian, philosopher, or curriculum planner except for the fact that it has markedly changed the community college role. Many colleges have now stepped completely outside the tradition of higher education, a tradition that was based on academic disciplines, the liberal arts, scholarship, and the process of learning. Instead, they have become agencies preparing people for the work force, offering short-cycle courses of interest to limited numbers of the citizenry, and attempting to remedy the defects occasioned by the failures of the lower schools.

Since the community colleges serve as the main point of entry to post-secondary education for most students who continue their studies beyond the high school, the form of education they provide is important to all who are concerned with higher education in America. More than half the students who begin college begin in a community college; forty percent of all first time in college, full-time freshmen; two-thirds of the ethnic minorities. The community colleges have, indeed, opened education beyond the high school for sizeable numbers of people who would never have otherwise attended college. Thus, it has popularized higher education and afforded access. But access to what? If the 4.5 million students attending the 1,250 two-year colleges in America find a curriculum comprised nearly exclusively of career, compensatory, and community-based studies, those who seek access to the higher learning have been ill-

served. And the tradition of liberal learning in American higher education has been debased.

Concerned educators who would maintain the liberal arts in the community colleges have attended primarily to preserving the disciplines and patterns of thought by a continued adherence to freshmen and sophomore type courses in college-parallel programs. They have sought to have these courses required for students who would obtain associates degrees. However, it is a losing fight. Most students come to community colleges seeking job skills or recreation; most are part-timers; fewer than five percent of them obtain degrees. More students who gain occupational certificates in community college transfer to universities than do those who gain associate in arts degrees, and more so-called "reverse transfers" enter the community college from the senior institutions. Insisting that students who want the degree must take the liberal arts courses will prove as futile as did the 19th century insistence that students who sought bachelors degrees must have a working knowledge of classical languages. Most community college students shun the degree; most avoid liberal arts courses per se; many who attempt liberal arts courses fail to complete them.

If the liberal arts have a contribution to make to the lives of all students, they must be reconceptualized to fit the realities of community colleges. It is time to re-structure them so that they have a place beyond that which they occupy in the college-parallel program. It is time to extract their finest principles so that they can be included in the career, compensatory, and community education programs that dominate the curriculum. It is time to expand them lest they fade out as surely as the transfer programs are fading.

Through a series of studies funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Science Foundation, the Center for the Study of

Community Colleges has gathered considerable data on the humanities and the sciences -- those disciplines that comprise the liberal arts. Because we are proselytes for these programs and for the collegiate function as well as researchers, we have also been involved in gathering information about and assisting new groups formed in their support, and we have continued to recommend certain approaches developed previously that will bring the liberal arts closer into the lives of community college students. The remainder of my talk today will discuss the new organizations that have been formed in the past two years and will describe some ways to increase participation in the humanities and sciences.

The Community College Humanities Association was formed for faculty teaching the humanities. Aided by grants from the Mellon Foundation and under the direction of Don Schmeltekopf of Union College (New Jersey), this group is comprised of six regional divisions. In his keynote address to its initial meating in November, 1979, Art Cohen discussed some of our Center's findings and urged members to revitalize their disciplines and use their regional meetingsas a forum for creative ideas. The Association publishes its newsletter, The Community College Humanist, three times annually.

During the 1979-80 academic year, a number of administrators of Western community colleges discussed the feasibility of cooperative efforts to expand, emphasize, refine, and strengthen the humanities at their institutions. These discussions led to the formation of the League for the Humanities. Judy Eaton of Clark County Community College has taken the lead in organizing this group of participating colleges, in gaining support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and in planning a conference to be held in Las Vegas this coming September. Discussions will center on such issues as marketing the humanities, faculty exchanges, cooperative developmental efforts,

and resource development.

Also in late 1979, the AACJC sponsored a National Assembly at Airlie House, Virginia that was devoted exclusively to the humanities. Using Center data as background material, this group of presidents, faculty members, and concerned others debated and detailed ways of supporting this endangered species, often in other-than-traditional ways.

One outgrowth of this assembly was a series of three conferences in Baltimore, Los Angeles, and Memphis, again sponsored by AACJC and organized by Judith Jeffrey Howard. These two-day workshops concentrated on the relationships between the humanities and vocational programs. Exemplary ways of packaging the liberal arts for technology students were presented, and teams of instructors and department chairpersons from various colleges worked together to explore ways of integrating these areas.

Several community colleges across the country are also examining ways in which they can devote more attention to the liberal arts. One approach is through the humanities lay advisory groups that we have been advocating for the past four years. Under the direction of Dorothy Berger, the San Diego Community College district is forming such an advisory board, and Mary Jensen has reported that Mission College in Santa Clara County (California) is also planning this type of organization. Allen Gates from Clark College in Washington organized such a lay advisory group on his campus a couple of years ago and has had considerable success in discussing the perils, pitfalls, and plusses with key personnel from other colleges. Randy Beckwith of our Center staff has been working with faculty in several Washington colleges, and as a result, other humanities advisory groups are being formed.

While the guidelines for the advisory groups must be idiosyncratic to each college, certain procedures and techniques are general. For example, the group

instigators should be humanities faculty members who generate names of prominent men and women to serve on the humanities board, people who represent the arts, museums, musical groups, theatre as well as bankers, legislators and other influential individuals. The group appointed from the initial lists would then become advisors and supporters of the humanities to the college. They would act as guest lecturers both on and off campus, provide students with role models, assist in student recruitment, and perhaps even arrange apprenticeships in their offices for humanities students.

Still other colleges are attempting to redress the imbalance in community college programs and thus to ensure the comprehensiveness of their institutions with a new emphasis on the collegiate function. Many of you are familiar with Miami-Dade's General Education program and its interdisciplinary courses in the sciences and the humanities. Much time, effort, and expense has been invested in these programs, but if Bob McCabe and his group have their way, all students enrolled in this very large college district will have some exposure to the liberal arts.

Mike Parsons of Hagerstown Community College has described a course combining art, drama, and music that is now required in four career programs -- business administration, communications, electrical engineering technology, and mechanical engineering technology. It is designed to introduce non-transfer students to the styles, techniques, and philosophies of the humanistic disciplines through films, guest lectures, field trips, and student projects.

The three-course sequence in Life Studies at Abraham Baldwin College (Georgia) emphasizes history, literature, philosophy, and writing. Instituted six years ago to replace the general education requirements in history and English, their chief objective is to demonstrate the relevance of the

humanities to students who are preparing to be technicians and middle-level managers in agriculturally-related fields.

At Yakima Valley College (Washington), "Humanities Encounter" is a one-unit course that introduces drama, art, music, and literature through lectures, gallery visits, and theatrical and musical performances to students in the auto mechanics and agriculture programs. This course was conceived by the occupational programs chairman and cooperatively planned by him and the humanities chairman. Because it was offered at 5:00 p.m. to fit in with the students' other course times and work schedules, the vocational faculty not only supported the course but guaranteed enrollment for it.

The Man and Technology courses at Valencia Community College (Florida) organized by Louis Schlegel are forerunners in interdisciplinary programs. Variations on this theme have been developed at Saddleback Community College (California), Brevard Community College (Florida), Chemeketa (Oregon), and Genesse College in New York State. Thelma Altschuler and Dick Janero's Art of Being Human, developed at Miami-Dade, is yet another ambitious and interesting program.

Still other courses introduce the humanities to students in occupational programs: "Perspectives on Dying", "Literary reflections on Living/Suffering/Dying", "Literature for Technologies", and "Ethical Issues in American Health Care". The titles are intriguing, and the courses are a breakthrough for many institutions. Each utilizes one or more approaches to integrate the humanities into occupational curriculum. These include:

- designing and interdisciplinary humanities course;
- creating a specialized humanities course targeted for specific occupational students;
- revising an existing humanities course so that the content is tailored for certain programs;

- creating humanities modules that deal with issues and content pertinent to a vocational area; and
- preparing resource materials, such as bibliographies, study guides, and study questions.

This list is not exhaustive. Many more exemplary programs could be mentioned -- a fact that is most gratifying for those of us who are advocates of the liberal arts in the community colleges. Perhaps the collegiate function is about to get a new life line.

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MAY 22 1981